

Sermon Outline.

THE HEALING OF THE DEAF MUTE.

An abridged sermon on Mark vii, 32.
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In the ministrations of Jesus among the sick and afflicted, he met with few cases better fitted to excite the Divine compassion than this one of the deaf mute. The severity of the affliction consisted chiefly in the mental, and consequently the moral and spiritual deprivations occasioned by the loss of hearing. The chief of the avenues by which a knowledge of the world without can be conveyed to the soul within, was closed. His dull ears prevented him from winning any treasury of accumulated knowledge, and consequently his tongue could not pay out the ready coin of speech. In this case everything recorded is significant; the nature of the malady, the method of the treatment and the thoroughness of the cure.

Articulate speech is a relative power and whether it be a Divine gift or of human invention, it is dependent upon the sense of hearing. Just as true is it that the powers of the soul for good are relative powers, and the silence of the soul is occasioned by the dullness of spiritual hearing. This man could not speak because he could not hear, and there are thousands of lives to day which might be, and ought to be eloquent with the praise of God, that are mute and useless because they will not hear. There is persuasive energy enough in the Word, there is power enough in the truth to make your life and mine eloquent for God, if we will but put ourselves in the right attitude toward these forces. We complain of our little ability to do good, of the drowsiness of our spiritual powers and of the little progress we make in the religious life; and the cause of it all is not far to seek. It is not a lack of ability, but neglect of the means. Jesus qualified this man for useful work by opening the avenue through which correct teaching could come, and by the gift of the Word, by the ministrations of the Spirit and by the sufferings of Christ; He has opened for us a wide field for the exercise of our spiritual activities.

Have you no praises for God, my brother? No adoration for his holiness? No thanks for his mercy? No worship for his love? Are you mute while others are eloquent with his praise? Then your silence must be because you have never heard; because you are a deaf mute. You have made dull your hearing; you have closed your ears with prejudice; worldliness has blunted your spiritual senses, and now you are deaf to the appeals of conscience and the voice of God. *Hear and your soul shall live.* Jesus in healing this man took him apart; he stood him aside from the crowd. The work was to be personal. Jesus deals with men individually, God looks upon us; He extends mercy to us; He loves us, not as a race or a nation merely, not even as a church or a family, but as individuals. Each of us stands aside, separate from the rest in God's sight; for he who is so intimately acquainted with the sparrows that he notices each one that falls, does not look upon humanity in the abstract, as a mass, but as individuals.

In our responsibility we stand separate. My record and yours are on different pages in Heaven's great register. Your good cannot be set down to my credit; nor can my faults be charged against you. The conduct of others cannot alter your relation to God. The church may be warm with zeal or its spirituality may be at the zero point, but neither condition can affect your responsibility. No matter who may be false, you must be true. No matter who runs away, you must stand firm because in the judgment by and by, as in our duty now, we each shall stand apart from the rest.

When the afflicted man had put himself in the attitude to be healed, when he was alone with the great Physician, he merited the blessing he received as little as before, but he had complied with the conditions. When God heals the souls of men, the conditions he puts upon those to be healed are few and easy, but they are imperative. Not because the terms in themselves have any saving efficacy any more than the withdrawing from the multitude in the case of the deaf mute, but because they furnish an occasion for a test of the one supreme condition without which there is no promise; and

that condition is *self-surrender*, the acceptance of the Lord's plan and the surrender of our own.

Jesus put his fingers in the deaf man's ears, he touched his tongue and there was healing in the touch; his ears were opened and his tongue was loosed. The Lord touched the tongue of Peter on Pentecost and his tongue was on fire for God. He touched the tongue of Paul and it became like the pen of a ready writer. He touched the tongue of Wesley and Luther and Spurgeon and they became eloquent and persuasive and convincing in declaring the love of God and in winning souls for Christ. Oh! that there were more sanctified tongues, tongues made holy by the touch of God.

I think there is no music sweeter to God than the language of prayer and for that the sanctified tongue is fitted for prayer, and thanksgiving and praise.

Jesus looked Heavenward when he wrought this work; a recognition of the face which is elsewhere taught; The Father who dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. In this upward look is found the condition for all true usefulness in the world and work for God. This world indeed is the sphere of our activity, but imperfect indeed will be our work unless it asks direction of the world above; unless our plans and purposes have a wider scope than this present life. In the busy restless activity of our nineteenth century life, there is no lack of earnest workers, but it is to be feared that too many look down and not up both for the inspiration and reward of their labor. Such work is little better than idleness; it reaps no rewards which are permanent. It is like children building houses of sand by the sea shore when the tide is out. With infinite labor and pains they complete their work; but the tide soon comes in, and a big wave from the sea sweeps over their house of sand and labor which it cost. Soon my brother, a wave from the great sea of eternity shall sweep over your life's work and if you have been building only for time you shall suffer loss. Look up my brother as you work; let your activity know no bounds, but let the labor you do have reference to eternity as well as to time. Look up as you work; do it as in his sight.